

Biennial Report
of the
Washington Crossing Park Commission
June 1, 1958 to May 31, 1960

Washington Crossing State Park was created on July 25, 1917 by Act of Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to memorialize the event which was the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

This crossing of the Delaware River on Christmas night, 1776, by General Washington and his broken Army was the "whole hope of liberty in America."

The park now comprises 498 acres in Bucks County and is administered by the Washington Crossing Park Commission with the Secretary of the Department of Forests and Waters an ex-officio member.

An estimated 2,500,000 people visited the park during this reporting period. Boy and Girl Scouts camping in the park totalled 7,200.

Ground was broken for the Museum and Memorial Auditorium Building (Project No. G. S. A. 165-1) on July 10, 1958, and the completed building was formally dedicated by Governor David L. Lawrence on September 19, 1959. The native field-stone structure is keystone-shaped to emphasize Pennsylvania's keystone role in American history.

Emanuel Leutze's famous painting "Washington Crossing the Delaware" is displayed on the stage of the 384-seat auditorium, while a recorded commentary explains the story of the more than century old canvas and the stirring event it depicts. The painting was featured in a double-page color spread in the Saturday Evening Post of April 23, 1960.

The foyer contains glass cases in which articles of historic interest are exhibited.

The east wing is occupied by the David Library of the American Revolution, a collection of original Washington letters and other priceless manuscripts and books pertaining to the Revolution. These were donated to the Commonwealth by a generous local resident, with the proviso that they be kept permanently at Washington Crossing.

Attendance in this new building has been running at a rate which will total 170,000 for the first year. It is open to the public every day of the year.

Also open every day is the Thompson-Neely House, where the number of visitors increased from 51,017 in the 1956-58 biennium to 75,969 in the period of this report. They came from every one of the fifty states, and from 30 foreign countries on every continent.

The house is interesting to many as a fine example of early Pennsylvania architecture, showing its development thru the 18th Century from a one-room house to one of twelve rooms with its attics, cellars and 8 fireplaces. It also graphically illustrates the advance in economic status of its owners along with that of the Country.

Others are interested in the interior furnished authentically to illustrate the mode of living of the families who lived here.

All are interested in the house as an historic shrine commemorating its important use as the "House of Decision" for the Delaware crossing.

The Thompson-Neely House is now known from coast to coast. Visitors from California have reported being told before leaving home that this is the one historic spot in the East not to miss.

The Commission is profoundly grateful to the Washington Crossing Committee of the Bucks County Federation of Womens' Clubs and the many other dedicated groups and individuals who have given so much work and financial support to help make the Thompson-Neely House and the Memorial Building the great educational attractions they now are.

Similar gratitude is expressed to Secretary Goddard for his kind and constant encouragement of these projects, and his permission to use suitable items from the Logan estate in furnishing the above buildings.

The Wildflower Preserve observed its 25th Anniversary in October 1959, at which time an appropriate celebration was held, and a 16 page booklet listing the blooming dates of Wild Flowers of Pennsylvania was issued to the public. The Preserve Committee of the Conservation Council of Eastern Pennsylvania was given grateful thanks for its untiring support and horticultural supervision of the Preserve through all these years.

Over 4,000 plants were added to the Preserve representing over 150 species including about 25 species not formerly present in the Preserve and one entirely new fern species (tentatively named *Dryopteris wherryi*) recently discovered by Dr. Edgar T. Wherry of the University of Pennsylvania.

There are now 281 dedicated trees in Penn's Woods, the 14 acre tract which displays native trees of the Commonwealth.

A new type of label was developed after years of research and is now being installed. A much-needed information booth was erected in the parking lot, and several large hand-carved signs placed throughout the Preserve.

Approximately 150,000 people visited the Preserve and over 200 special guided tours by the Preserve staff and hostesses were given to scout groups, garden clubs, school children, etc.

The Preserve and Trails are sponsored by the Preserve Committee, 49 Garden Clubs, 24 Women's Clubs and many individuals.

Tons of Japanese honeysuckle were eradicated. A new propagation bed was also built.

Numerous articles written by the Preserve staff, Committee members, etc. appeared in Horticultural magazines and newspapers.

Over 2,000 people attended the Summer Nature Lectures given free to the public during the summer months.

The Saturday Evening Post article of August 23, 1958, featuring the Bird Banding Station, increased the already heavy attendance at the outdoor bird programs held every Saturday and Sunday afternoon all year around. A quarter of a million people have visited the Banding Station since its opening in 1952. During the two year period covered by this report an estimated 75,000 people came to the lawns of the Nature Center to watch feeding wild birds, and 50,000 attended at least one

scheduled bird program.

The Childrens Programs held on Sunday afternoons at 2 P.M. have been popular from the beginning. Numerous newspaper editorials have publicized these programs during which children have an opportunity to become acquainted with native Pennsylvania animals, birds, and reptiles held in Dr. Fluck's hands.

The School Programs held at the Bird Banding Station on Wednesdays in April, May and June were attended by upwards of 5,000 school children who came with their teachers in school buses. Dr. Charles H. Boehm of the Department of Public Instruction sent a delegation from his office headed by Dr. Genevieve Bowen in May 1960 to inspect this type of program.

The Joint Cooperative Committee, composed of elected staff members from the upper park, lower park and police force plus the superintendent and two members of the Commission, continued its monthly meetings for the purpose of presenting and discussing ideas from all personnel for improving the park and increasing its value to the public.

From these sessions came such now completed projects as the specially designed aluminum and plexiglas windows in Bowman's Hill Tower, many new informative signs, a better system of policing to combat vandalism, installation of floodlights to permit night skating on the lagoon, creation of a temporary parking lot at the Memorial Building, additional parking barriers made of poles obtained free from the utility companies, plus innumerable improvements in operation and maintenance procedures.

Perhaps more important than any physical accomplishment of the Joint Cooperative Committee was the continued increase in morale and good fellowship in the entire staff and Commission. This produced greater value to the Commonwealth for each dollar of appropriation granted to Washington Crossing State Park than ever before.

List of Appended Photographs;

1. Governor David L. Lawrence dedicates the new Memorial Building, Washington Crossing State Park, September 19, 1959.
2. The audience at the dedication of the new Memorial Building, Washington Crossing State Park, September 19, 1959.
3. Memorial Building, Washington Crossing State Park.
4. Left to Right, Governor David L. Lawrence, Rear Admiral Trevor Leutze (U.S.N. Ret., grandson of the artist), Secretary of the Department of Forests and Waters Maurice K. Goddard, and James J. Rorimer, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, owner of the Leutze painting. Photographed September 19, 1959 at dedication of Memorial Building.
5. The Thompson-Neely House, Washington Crossing State Park.
6. View from Bowman's Hill tower showing a portion of one picnic area in Washington Crossing State Park.



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7. One of the several annual Scout Camporees in Washington Crossing State Park.
8. Lagoon in lower section of Washington Crossing State Park, showing new floodlights for night skating in suitable weather.
9. Typical winter audience for one of the year-round bird banding programs, every Saturday and Sunday at the Nature Center in Washington Crossing State Park.
10. The star of the bird programs in Washington Crossing State Park - a Great Horned Owl which has been petted by over 20,000 people (May, 1960).
11. A baby Woodchuck orphaned in Washington Crossing State Park. It was instrumental in arousing a serious interest in nature study and conservation among thousands of school children in 1958-60.

